



For Immediate Release  
Office of the Press Secretary  
September 2, 2002

## President Bush Thanks America's Workers at Labor Day Picnic

Carpenters Joint Apprenticeship Center  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

2:35 P.M. EDT



**VIDEO** Multimedia

President's Remarks

 [view](#)

 [listen](#)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I thank you very much for this warm welcome. Thanks for inviting me. If I speak too long, it's going to remind me of Crawford. (Laughter.) But I appreciate you all coming. I love to see your families.

I'm here to talk about the greatness of this country. And it starts with the fact that we've got great Americans who work hard to make a living to put food on the table. Our workers are the most productive, the hardest working, the best craftsmen in the world. And I'm here to thank all those who work hard to make a living here in America. (Applause.) I also want to talk today about how to make sure our country is safer, our country is stronger, and our country is a better place for everybody.

But before I do so, I want to thank Doug. I appreciate his leadership. I appreciate his vision. But most of all I appreciate the fact that Doug McCarron cares deeply, deeply about the members of his union. Each person in this union matters to Doug. You can tell it when you talk to him, and I've had a chance to talk to him quite a lot. He is a fine, fine man, who cares deeply about people and who loves his country just as much as I do. Doug, thank you for your leadership, and thank you for your friendship. (Applause.)

I, too, want to thank Jack Brooks. I've had the honor of meeting Jack before. He's a decent, kind, smart, hardworking fellow. And I appreciate Jack's leadership as much as you do. I want to thank Ray Vogel, as well, for giving me a tour of the training center here. One of the things that distinguishes this union is that they understand through training, somebody is going to get better pay. If you help a man or a woman enhance their skills, it's going to enhance their pocketbook. And I appreciate so very much the attention that this union pays to the skill level of its members. So I want to thank Jack and Ray for helping set this picnic up, and giving me a chance to come by and talk to you all.

I also appreciate the Secretary of Labor being here. Elaine Chao is doing a fine job. Her door is open. People are able to come in and visit with her. She's a good, honest and open person. And I appreciate her service to the country. (Applause.)

I want to thank your Governor, Mark Schweiker, your Secretary General Mike Fisher, your Allegheny County Executive Jim Roddey, and the Mayor of Pittsburgh Tim Murphy. Thank you all for coming. (Applause.) The Mayor has got a lot of spunk -- he challenged me to a three-mile run. (Laughter.) I said, fine, see you in Crawford at 4:00 p.m. in the afternoon in August. (Laughter.)

I do appreciate Melissa Hart and Phil English coming, members of the United States Congress -- thank you all for being here. (Applause.)

I had the honor of meeting a lady named Doris Harris today. Where are you, Doris? Thank you for coming. (Applause.) You see, the reason I introduced Doris is because she volunteers her time to help people in need. Doris knows that when somebody is shut in, they're alone and lonely. And so she takes time to visit homebound seniors, to say, I love you, what can I do to help you? Doris is a member -- is a soldier in the army of compassion here in America. And the reason I bring that up is because there are soldiers in the armies of

compassion here amongst you, as well. I want to thank Doris, and I want to thank you all for doing everything you can to bring love and compassion to the neighborhoods in which you live. It's the true strength of the -- America. (Applause.)

You know, Doug mentioned a year ago, Labor Day -- I was in Wisconsin talking to carpenters. I said that we were a nation that's strong because our people are strong. See, we're a great nation because we've got great people. (Applause.) I said, we're a decent nation because our people are decent.

I didn't realize when I said that at the time, how tested we would be. But a couple of days later, the enemy hit us, and they tested the character of this country. They tested our will. They tested our very fiber. I don't know what was going through their mind when they attacked us. (Laughter.) They must have thought we were so materialistic, so self-absorbed, so selfish, that all we would do is shrug our shoulders and file a lawsuit maybe. They didn't understand the America we know. (Applause.)

No, they hit us, and we united. They hit us, and we're now working together as a nation, to make the nation a safer place, a strong place and a better place. My most important job is to keep our families safe. That's my most important job now. I want you to know that there's still an enemy out there that hates America. I'm sure your kids, they're wondering, why would you hate America? We didn't do anything to anybody. Well, they hate America because we love freedom. (Applause.)

We cherish our freedoms. We value our freedoms. We love the fact that people can worship an almighty God in a free land, any way they choose to worship. (Applause.) We value the idea of people speaking their mind freely here in America. We value a free press; we value our freedoms. But most importantly, we say each life matters. Everybody counts, everybody has got purpose, everybody is important in life. (Applause.)

And the enemy doesn't view it that way. They don't view it that -- they don't value life. See, they've hijacked a great religion and they're willing to kill innocent people in the name of their sordid attitude about the future. And so, so long as we love freedom, which we'll do forever, and so long as this enemy is -- still stand, they're going to come and try to get us. That's just the reality that we face. And so, therefore, our biggest job is to protect the homeland.

And there are a lot of good people working hard to do so, there really are. A lot of fine folks in Washington at the federal level, and here in Pennsylvania at the state level, and at the local level in Pittsburgh, doing everything they can to run down every lead, to chase down every idea, to hold people to account, to disrupt. And we're making some pretty good progress. But I've asked the Congress to join me in creating a new homeland security department. And the reason I did is because I want to be able to come and, when I see the people, say our most important priority is to protect America, and therefore, I want all agencies involved with protecting America under one umbrella. See, if you want the most important thing to be done, you've got to gather up over 100 agencies that have got something to do with homeland security and put them under one boss, put them under one lead, so you can not only change the priorities, but change the culture.

I'll give you one example. We need to know who's coming into America, what they're bringing into America, and whether or not they're leaving America when they say they are. (Applause.) But, see, on your border, you've got your INS and your Customs and your Border Patrol, three different agencies. And they've got different cultures. And we need to have them under one umbrella, so we can do a better job of assuring the American people we're doing their job. Look, anybody who wants to join a union can do so in this crowd, with the homeland security department. I mean, if you're a whistle-blower, you'll get protections. You'll have all the rights to be free to join. But I need the flexibility to put the right people at the right place at the right time to protect the American people. And the Senate better get it right. (Applause.)

No, we're doing everything we can. A lot of people are working hard, but the best way to secure our homeland for the long run is to hunt these killers down, one person at a time, and bring them to justice. And that's what America is going to do. (Applause.)

And that's how you ultimately make America a safer place. For those of you who have got relatives in the military, you need to be proud of the job they're doing -- I sure am. (Applause.) It's a different kind of war. In the old days, you could count tanks and figure out how strong the enemy was. This is an enemy that hides in caves. They try to find the darkest cave, the deepest cave, and then they send youngsters to their suicidal deaths. It's a different kind of war than we're used to.

But my attitude is, there's no cave deep enough and dark enough to hide from the long arm of justice of the United States and our friends and allies. And that's exactly what we're going to do, folks. It doesn't matter how long it takes. You see, they put the spotlight on us, and we're going to find out what we're made out of, and so are they. And what we're made out of is, we're freedom-loving people who are plenty tough and plenty determined to make sure the future for our children is a future that is free and peaceful. (Applause.)

And that's why I want to strengthen the military. Any time you put a soldier in harm's way, they deserve the best pay, the best training and the best possible equipment. (Applause.) So a stronger America to me means a stronger military. And that's why I've submitted the biggest increase in defense spending since the mid-'80s, when Ronald Reagan was the President. I wanted to send a message. The message is, we'll take care of our people. See, we owe it not only to those who wear the uniform, we owe it to their loved ones, as well. We owe it to the husbands and wives of our soldiers. We owe it to the moms and dads; we owe it to the sons and daughters.

But I also wanted to send a message to the enemy, and our friends, that we're in this deal for the long haul. See. When it comes to defending that which we hold dear to our hearts, we're in it for the long pull. I've asked Congress to get that bill to my desk soon. They don't need to be playing politics with the defense bill. (Applause.) They don't need to hold it up for other reasons, they need to get home -- come from their homes, they need to get to Washington and get me a bill as soon as possible, so we can win this war and fight this war. That's what -- we owe it to those who wear the uniform to get the defense bill done early. (Applause.)

And part of making sure we have a strong America is to understand there are some people who want to find work and can't find work, and therefore, we're not as strong as we should be. A strong America is one where there's economic security. See, we want people working. I know the statistics and all that business. What I worry about is when I hear the stories of people who can't find work. And so we've got to make sure that we continue to focus on jobs, and job creation, and job growth.

I think the ingredients are pretty good. I mean, when you think about it, interest rates are low -- that's good. Inflation is low, and that's positive. Productivity is up, because we've got the best workers in the world, and that's important. (Applause.) So I'm encouraged about job growth, but I'm not satisfied. And neither should you be, and neither should the United States Congress. And there are some practical ways that we can build on this foundation for growth, starting with getting a terrorism insurance bill out of the United States Congress.

Let me tell you what that means. That means some of these big construction programs can go forward. See, a lot of them, they've been delayed because they can't get insurance. They can't get insurance because of what the terrorists did to America on September the 11th. So Doug and I and a lot of other concerned citizens have been working with Congress. We said, okay, that's fine, we'll take some of the risk to get these big construction projects moving.

There's been over \$8 billion worth of projects that have been delayed because they can't get insurance. That means 300,000 workers aren't working. You see, if we want to do something to make sure the job base continues, Congress needs to get moving on a terrorism insurance bill. (Applause.)

And this bill has got to be good for hard-hats, not lawyers. (Applause.) This bill -- we get this bill, a lot of folks are going to go back to work. And the same with the energy bill. See, the energy bill that we're talking about is a jobs bill. You get the energy bill, we're going to get more jobs here in America. It's also a national security bill. See, we don't -- the less we import oil from foreign sources, the more our national security is strong. (Applause.) And so we want to make sure that we conserve more, that we use our technologies to develop renewable sources

of energy -- that makes sense, we can do that. We can do a better job of exploring environmentally. But we need a bill -- we need a bill, we need a bill on behalf of the American workers, and we need a bill on behalf of the national security of America. Congress needs to quit talking about energy, and get back to work and do something on behalf of the American people when it comes to energy. (Applause.)

In order to get confidence back in the economy, we've got to do a good job of making America's pensions strong. You see, one of the things that we did, we passed a -- part of this corporate reform bill, one of the things we passed which made a lot of sense is that if the boss gets to sell, everybody else does. What's good for the head person is good for the people on the shop floor. We also allow people to diversify out of their 401(k)s. You ought not to be stuck in one stock forever. After a reasonable period of time, you ought to be able to diversify. You need to get the best investment advice. We need to make sure our workers are protected when it comes to pension reform. And the Congress needs to act on it. For the good of the economy, they need to act on this, just like they acted on corporate reform.

And now it's my turn to act. Let me tell you what's going to happen. If we catch somebody cooking the books, like we have been doing, it's no more easy money, it's just hard time. (Applause.) By far, the vast majority of our fellow citizens are honest and decent and honorable people; they just are. But a few have created a -- put a bad name out there. They've created a sense of -- lack of -- they diminish the confidence of the American people. We're putting those days behind us.

We had Republicans and Democrats work together to pass the most comprehensive corporate reform since Franklin Roosevelt was the President. I put together a task force, and I want to assure you, my fellow Americans, here on Labor Day, that if we catch them cooking the books, if we catch them fudging the numbers, if we catch people trying to put a sleight of hand to the detriment of employees and shareholders alike, there are going to be serious consequences here in America. We expect people to behave responsibly in our society. (Applause.)

And finally, in order to make sure the economy continues to grow and there's jobs, we've got to be wise about how you spend your money. See, every idea sounds like a good idea up there. Everybody throws something out there and it sounds like a brilliant idea. But they always cost in the billions, it seems like. One way I like to remind Congress about how to be fiscally responsible is to remind them whose money they're spending. It's not the government's money they spend, it's your money. It's the people's money. (Applause.)

No, we can meet our needs. We can meet our needs. And by the way, we can make that tax relief a permanent part of the tax code. You need to have more money in your pocket as far as I'm concerned. (Applause.) No, those are ways to make America a stronger place by continuing to focus on the economic security of all our citizens -- every citizen.

And we've got to make sure that America is not only safer and stronger, but a better place -- a better place. And there are ways to do that. One, America will be a better place when our seniors have got prescription drugs as a part of Medicare. (Applause.) That's a better country, a country that understands that Medicare serves an important purpose. Medicine has changed; Medicare hasn't. And therefore, our seniors don't have prescription drugs. It will be a better country when we do that.

It's a better country when we focus on educating every child -- not just a few children, but every single child. (Applause.) I want to thank the teachers who are here. (Applause.) I can tell. But remember, if you're a mom or a dad, you're a teacher. (Applause.)

We're a better country when we help people get off welfare by finding them work. We're a better country when people learn to work. (Applause.) This training center here makes us a better country. It's a better country when you've got people who are willing to help people help themselves. It's a better country. It's a better country when people can own their own homes. When you own something, it makes America a better place. We've got a minority gap in ownership here for homes in America. We need to do something about it. We need to close that gap. We need to help people with down payments. We need to get some -- we need to get more capital into the marketplace, so people can find ways to borrow money to build -- to buy their own home.

No, it's a -- the goal is more than just a safer country, it's a better place for all of us, see. I mean for all of us. You know, the enemy didn't realize, but out of the evil is going to come some incredible good here in America. I truly believe that, I believe that. (Applause.)

I believe that we can achieve peace. And I want you to tell your sons and daughters that we fight for our freedom in order for there to be peace, for the world to be more peaceful -- not only here at home, but for children all across the world. See, we value each human life as important. We don't try to distinguish, everybody has got worth in the eyes of the Almighty, as far as we're concerned in this nation. (Applause.)

But peace is our goal. Peace -- there's going to be some steep hills to climb, no question about it, but we're going to work hard to achieve peace. Out of the evil done by these killers will come peace, we think -- I think. We have to be tough and determined and resolute, but we can achieve peace.

And at home, we can have a better America. People say, well, what can I do to help. You can love your neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself. (Applause.) You can help a neighbor in need. You can go to a shut-in and say, I love you. That's just a part of being -- a part of loving your neighbor. You can mentor a child. You can understand your most important responsibility, if you're a mom or a dad, is to love your children with all your heart and all your soul. You should tell them you love them every single day. Put your arm around them. Find somebody who hurts, understand there's deep addiction and hopelessness in parts of our neighborhoods in America. And we can help change that, one person at a time.

See government, can hand out money -- pretty good at it -- (laughter) -- but it can't put hope into people's hearts. It can't put a sense of purpose in people's lives. Somebody said, well, I can't do everything. No, but you can do something. You can do something. See, we can change America, one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time.

And I call upon our fellow Americans, here on Labor Day, to be a part of that change in America. Be a part of the gathering momentum of millions of acts of kindness and decency which show the true face and character of the greatest nation, the greatest nation on the face of the Earth. (Applause.)

God bless you all. God bless. God bless America. Thank you all. (Applause.)

END 2:58 P.M.

---

**Return to this article at:**

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/20020902.html>

Click to Print  
this document

